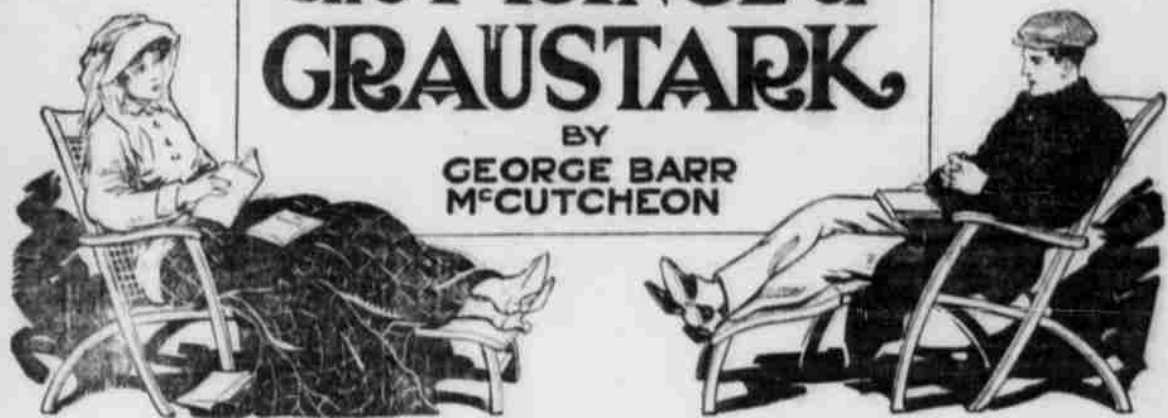


The PRINCE of GRAUSTARK

BY
GEORGE BARR
M'CUTCHEON



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PROLOGUE.

After a lapse of a very few years, lo, here is a story about a Prince of Graustark who is none other than the son of Princess Yette, the heroine of "Graustark." He is a full grown man, very much full grown, and very much of a man. Moreover, there is a beautiful girl in the offing, whose relation to Beverly of Graustark is that of daughter to mother; also there is a very shrewd, forceful, powerful American multimillionaire with a brilliant and lovely daughter. Now, given these ingredients, so to speak, and the reader may trust McCutcheon to mix them up to give them just the right flavor, to cook them to just the right turn and to serve a story piping hot, which will give as many million hours of thorough enjoyment as "Graustark" and "Beverly of Graustark" did in their time.

CHAPTER I.

Matrimony is Discussed.

"My dear," said Mr. Blithers, with decision, "you can't tell me."

"I know I can't," said his wife, quite as positively. She knew when she could tell him a thing and when she couldn't.

It was quite impossible to impart information to Mr. Blithers when he had the tips of two resolute fingers embedded in his ears. Mrs. Blithers had lived with her husband, more or less, for twenty-five years, and she knew him like a book. He was a forceful person who would have his own way, even though he had to put his fingers in his ears to get it. Moreover, when he called her "my dear" instead of the customary "Lou" it was a sign of supreme obstinacy on his part and could not by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as an indication of placid affection. He always said "my dear" at the top of his voice and with a great deal of insolubility.

Mr. William W. Blithers was a self-made man who had begun his career by shouting lustily at a team of mules in a railway construction camp. Other drivers had tried to improve on his vocabulary, but even the mules were able to appreciate the futility of such an ambition, and later on, when he came to own five or three railroads, to say nothing of a few mines and a steam yacht, his ability to drive men was even more noteworthy than his power over the jackasses had been.

Mr. and Mrs. Blithers had been discussing royalty. Up to the previous week they had restricted themselves to the nobility, but as an event of unexampled importance had transpired in the interregnum they now felt that it would be the roughest stupidity to consider any one short of a prince royal in nick-

ing out a suitable husband—or, more properly speaking, consort—for their only daughter, Maud Applegate Blithers, aged twenty.

Mrs. Blithers long ago had convinced her husband that no ordinary human being of the male persuasion was worthy of their daughter's hand and had set her heart on having nothing meaner than a duke on the family roll—Blithers attended to it for awhile as the payroll—with the choice lying between England and Italy.

But now, just as they were on the point of accepting in lieu of a duke an exceptionally promising count, the aforesaid event conspired to completely upset all of their plans—or notions, so to speak. It was nothing less than the arrival in America of an eligible prince of the royal blood, a ruling prince at that. As a matter of fact, he had not only arrived in America, but upon the vast estate adjoining their own in the Catskills.

Peccadillo promising to their hopes was the indisputable fact that the prince's mother had married an American, thereby establishing a precedent behind which no constitutional obstacle could thrive, and had lived very happily with the gentleman in spite of the critics.

It appears that the prince after leisurely crossing the continent on his way around the world had come to the Truxton Kings for a long promised and much desired visit, the duration of which depended to some extent on his own inclinations and not a little on the outcome of the war talk that affected the European nations—Russia

and Austria. Mr. Blithers was in a position to know that the little princeling over which the young man reigned was bound to be drawn into the vainglorious not as a belligerent or an ally, but in the matter of a loan that inconveniently expired within the year and which would hardly be renewed by Russia with the prospect of vast expenditures of war threatening her treasury. The loan undoubtedly would be called, and Graustark was not in a position to pay out of her own slender resources, two years of famine having fallen upon the people at a time when prosperity was most to be desired.

It was the private opinion of Mr. Blithers that the young prince and the trusted agents who accompanied him on his journey were in the United States solely for the purpose of arranging a loan through sources that could only be reached by personal appeal.

But all this is beside the question. The young Prince of Graustark was enjoying American hospitality, and no matter what he owed to Russia, America owed to him its most punctilious consideration.

The main point is that the prince was now rustling within what you might call a stone's throw of the capacious and lordly country residence of Mr. Blithers; moreover, he was an uncommonly attractive chap, with a laugh that was so charged with heartiness that it didn't seem possible that he could have a drop of royal blood in his vigorous young body. And the perfectly ridiculous part of the whole situation was that Mr. and Mrs. King lived in a modest, vine covered little house that could have been lost in the servants' quarters at Blitherswood. Especially aggravating, too, was the King's attitude. They were really nobodies, so to speak, and yet they blithely called their royal guest "Bobby" and allowed him to fetch and carry for

their women folk quite as if he were an ordinary whippersnapper up from the city to spend the week end.

The remark with which Mr. Blithers introduced this chapter was in response to an oft repeated declaration made by his wife. Mrs. Blithers merely had stated—but over and over again—that money couldn't buy everything in the world, referring directly to social eminence and indirectly to their secret



"You say you don't want Count What's-His-Name."

ambition to capture a prince of the royal blood for their daughter Maud. She had prefaced this opinion, however, with the exceedingly irritating insinuation that Mr. Blithers was not in his right mind when he proposed inviting the prince to spend a few weeks at Blitherswood, provided the young man could cut short his visit in the home of Mr. and Mrs. King, who, he had asseverated, were in no position to entertain royalty as royalty was in the habit of being entertained.

Long experience had taught Mr. Blithers to read the lip and eye language with some degree of certainty; so by watching his wife's indignant face closely he was able to tell when she was succumbing to reason. He was a burly, domineering person who reasoned for every one within range of his voice, and it was only when his wife became coldly sarcastic that he closed his ears and boomed his opinions into her very teeth, so to say, joyfully overwhelming her with facts which it were futile for her to attempt to deny. He was aware quite as much as if he had heard the words that she was now saying:

"Well there is absolutely no use arguing with you, Will. Have it your way if it pleases you."

Eying her with some uneasiness, he cautiously inserted his thumbs in the armholes of his broadened waistcoat and proclaimed:

"As I said before, Lou, there isn't a foreign nobleman, from the emperor down, who is above grabbing a few million dollars. They're all hard up."

"We were speaking of Prince Robin," remarked his wife, with a slight shrug. Mrs. Blithers came of better stock than her husband. His gaudieries frequently set her teeth on edge. She was born in Providence and sometimes mentioned the occurrence when particularly desirous of squelching him, not unkindly perhaps, but by way of making him realize that their daughter had good blood in her veins. Mr. Blithers had heard in a roundabout way that he first saw the light of day in Jersey City, although after he became famous Newark claimed him. He did not bother about the matter.

"Well, he's like all the rest of them," said he after a moment of indecision. Something told him that he really ought to refrain from talking about the cost of things, even in the bosom of his family. He had heard that only vulgarians speak of their possessions. "Now, there's no reason in the world why we shouldn't consider his offer. He—"

"Offer?" she cried, aghast. "He has made no offer. Will. He doesn't even know that Maud is in existence. How can you say such a thing?"

"I was merely looking ahead, that's all. My motto is 'Look ahead.' You know it as well as I do. Where would I be today if I hadn't looked ahead and seen what was going to happen before the other fellow had his eyes open? Will you tell me that? Where, I say?

"Cured"

Mrs. Jay McGee, of Stephenville, Texas, writes: "For nine (9) years, I suffered with womanly trouble. I had terrible headaches, and pains in my back, etc. It seemed as if I would die, I suffered so. At last, I decided to try Cardui, the woman's tonic, and it helped me right away. The full treatment not only helped me, but it cured me."

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What's more, where would I be now if I hadn't looked ahead and seen what a marriage with the daughter of Judge Morton would mean to me in the long run?" He felt that he had uttered a very pretty and convincing compliment. "I never made a bad bargain to my life, Lou, and it wasn't guesswork when I married you. You, my dear old girl, you were the solid foundation on which I—"

"I know," she said wearily. "You've said it a thousand times—The foundation on which I built my temple of posterity—yes, I know, Will. But I am still unalterably opposed to making ourselves ridiculous in the eyes of Mr. and Mrs. King."

"Ridiculous? I don't understand you?"

"Well, you will after you think it over," she said quietly, and he scowled in positive perplexity.

"Don't you think he'd be a good match for Maud?" he asked, after many minutes. He felt that he had thought it over.

"Are you thinking of kidnapping him, Will?" she demanded.

"Certainly not! But all you've got to do is to say that he's the man for Maud and I'll—I'll do the rest. That's the kind of a man I am, Lou. You say you don't want Count What's-His-Name—that is, you don't want him as much as you did—and you do say that it would be the grandest thing in the world if Maud could be the Princess of Graustark."

"Graustark, Will?"

"That's what I said. Well, if you want her to be the Princess of THAT I'll see that she is, provided this fellow is a gentleman and worthy of her. The only prince I ever knew was a rascal, and I'm going to be careful about this one. You remember that meanly?"

"There is no question about Prince Robin," said she sharply.

"I suppose the only question is, How much will he want?"

"You mean—settlement?"

"Sure."

"Have you no romance in your soul, William Blithers?"

"I never believed in fairy stories," said he grudgingly. "And, what's more, I don't take any stock in cheap novels in which American heroes go about marrying into royal families and all that sort of rot. It isn't done, Lou. If you want to marry into a royal family, you've got to put up the coin."

"Prince Robin's mother, the poor Princess Yette, married an American for love, let me remind you."

"Umph! Where is this Graustark, anyway?"

"Somewhere east of the setting sun," she quoted. "You must learn how to pronounce it."

"I never was good at foreign languages. By the way, where is Maud this afternoon?"

"Motoring."

He waited for additional information. It was not vouchsafed, so he demanded somewhat fearfully:

"Who with?"

"Young Scoville."

He scowled. "He's a leaver, Lou. No good in the world. I don't like the way you let—"

"He is of a very good family, my dear, I—"

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"Is he—or—in love with her?"

"Certainly. Why not? Isn't every one she meets in love with her?"

"I—I suppose so," he admitted sheepishly. His face brightened. "And there's no reason why this prince shouldn't fall heels over head, is there? Well, there you are! That will make a difference in the settlement, believe me, a difference of a couple of millions at least!"

She arose abruptly. "You are positively disgusting, Will. Can't you think of anything but—"

"Say, ain't that Maudie coming up the drive now? Sure it is! By gracious, did you ever see anything to beat her? She's got 'em all beat a mile when it comes to looks and style and— Oh, by the way," lowering his voice to a hoarse, confidential whisper, "I wouldn't say anything to her about the marriage just yet if I were you. I want to look him over first."

Prince Robin of Graustark was as good looking a chap as one would see in a week's journey. Little would one suspect him of being the descendant of a long and distinguished line of princes save for the unmistakable though indefinable something in his eye that exacted rather than invited the homage of his fellow man. His laugh was a free and merry one, his spirits as effervescent as wine, his manner blithe and boyish, yet beneath all this fair and guileless exposition of carelessness lay the sober integrity of caste.

His mother, the beautiful, gracious and lamented Princess Yette, set all royal circles by the ears when she married the American, Lorry, back in the nineties. A special act of the ministry had legalized this union, and the son of the American was not deprived of his right to succeed to the throne which his forebears had occupied for centuries. From his mother he had inherited the right of kings; from his father the spirit of freedom; from his mother the power to see beyond that majesty. When little more than a babe in arms he was orphaned, and the affairs of state fell upon the shoulders of three loyal and devoted men who served as regents until he became of age.

He was seven when the great revolt headed by Count Mariani came so near to overthrowing the government, and he behaved like the prince that he was. It was during those perilous times that he came to know the gallant Truxton King, in whose home he was now a happy guest. But before Truxton King he knew the lovely girl who became the wife of that devoted adventurer and who, to him, was at ways to be "Aunt Lorraine."

As a very small boy he had paid two visits to the home land of his father, but after the death of his parents his valuable little person was guarded so jealously by his subjects that not once had he set foot beyond the borders of Graustark, except on two widely separated occasions of great pomp and ceremony at the courts of Vienna and Rome. (Continued on next page.)

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COMMISSIONER'S SALE.

Fulton Circuit Court, Ky.

B. T. Davis Plaintiff

Against

Mrs. E. A. Edwards & Ede Defendant.—Equity.

By virtue of a Judgment and Order of Sale of Fulton Circuit Court, rendered at the January Term, thereof, 1916, in the above cause, for the sum of Four hundred sixty five and 80/100 Dollars and interest from Dec. 27th, 1914, and Three hundred forty two and 15/100 Dollars and interest from May 1, 1916, at the rate of six per cent, per annum, and paid, and costs herein, I shall proceed to offer for sale at the Court House door in Hickman, Ky., to the highest bidder at 1 P. M., on Monday, the 13th day of March 1916, at Ten o'clock P. M., or thereabout, being County Court day, upon a credit of six months the following described property, to-wit: part of the south half of the S. E. Quarter of section 21, T. 1, R. 5 West, Fulton County, Kentucky, bounded as follows: beginning at a stake on the south line of the quarter pointed Mary berry west 12 1/2 links, a xy-amy south west 15 links a Wagon east 5 links and 30 poles to a stump, the south east 1/4 thence south 87 1/4 west with a south line 77 poles to a disjunct at forks of Spring branch, thence 71 1/4 west with a line 70 1/2 poles to a stake on the west line of quarter 26 poles north of the south west corner; thence along 3-12 degrees east with said west line 58 poles to a stake in a pasture pointed Ironwood, S. W. 1/4 Ironwood N. E. 1/4 links, thence north 87 degrees 55, east 14 1/2 to a stake in old field, 2 poles north of fence; thence south 10 degrees east 81 poles to line beginning, containing 67 acres more or less. Same was conveyed to Henry Pollock and S. T. Manning by J. M. Kirk et al, on December 27th, 1912 and recorded in B. No. 30, page 43 of Fulton County, Kentucky, and assigned to Henry Pollock and Sam Manning to E. A. Edwards and M. A. Brown and by John Kirk by M. M. Brown by deeds duly recorded in office of the clerk of the Fulton County Court.

For the purchase price, the purchaser, with approved security or securities, must execute bond bearing legal interest from the day of sale until paid, and making the force and effect of a judgment. Bidders will be prepared to comply promptly with these terms.

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